

ADDRESS TO THE BRANCHES AND SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETIES

Tributary to the United States Sanitary Commission.

At the late Quarterly Session of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, held at Washington, April 18th to 23d, 1865, the question of supplies, under the changed circumstances of the War, was fully considered. The Commission fully appreciate the solicitude its Branches must feel to release the Aid Societies at the earliest moment from the toil and cost of furnishing further supplementary supplies for the army. The Board is anxious to close its own labors, and to dismiss its Branches from their incessant cares at the first hour when humanity and loyalty will permit it. The advice and instructions it now issues are given in this spirit, and must suffer no discount from any supposed ignorance on its part of the desirableness of abridging the labors of the Homes of the land.

1. The policy of the nation, to make thorough work with the Rebellion, is likely enough to postpone peace for a while, and to keep a considerable army in active service, who will need all the usual aid from the Commission.

2. Up to this hour, notwithstanding the partial stoppage of recruiting, not a soldier has been withdrawn from the field, and more soldiers than usual are brought within the immediate reach of the Commission, by the cessation of hostilities, and active campaigning in parts of the field. This increases the demand on our stores.

3. Sherman's Army was practically almost beyond any service at our hands or any other supplementary relief from the time it left Savannah till it reached Goldsboro, and so many moving columns must always be. The moment active service ends, and an army has a fixed base, it begins to draw as largely as ever on our resources. In New Orleans, Mobile, and thereabouts, and on the James, our work goes on as usual.

4. Should peace be declared or assumed to exist to-morrow, the probability is that not less than two hundred thousand men would continue in garrison and other military duty for a long period to come. The general Hospitals are still full, and can only be slowly emptied, meanwhile requiring the usual supplementary care.

5. It would take from six months to a year to get the residue of the army disbanded and transferred to its homes, and this process would throw a vast amount of supervisory care and expenditure of supplies and of money upon the Sanitary Commission. Its department of Special Relief and of Soldiers Homes and Lodges (must) and claim agencies, expand as its field service and hospital business declines.

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6. The breaking up of the war cannot fail to restrict and perplex the supply system of the Government, by which a greatly increased number of exceptional sufferers must be created and the supplies and protection of the Sanitary Commission be more largely drawn upon.

7. Under these circumstances, the Board does not now contemplate the termination of its labors for at least a year to come. And it cannot work on efficiently, without both the continued pecuniary support of the public, and the usual energetic assistance of its Branches, and the Soldiers' Aid Societies tributary to them.

8. Accordingly, the Board calls upon its Branches and all the Soldiers' Aid Societies, to continue their labors with the old spirit, and to pour their supplies as usual into our Central Depots, assuring them that they shall have three months' notice of the time when it will be safe for them to contract or to stop their work.

9. The public are informed that pecuniary contributions were never more welcome to our treasury than now, and that any possible surplus the close of the war may leave in our hands, will have the most urgent claims upon it by the invalids and disabled men, without protectors, certain to be left at the mercy of the public. Their future is a subject of long and anxious study in the United States Sanitary Commission. Homes for this special class already exist in New York, Philadelphia and other places requiring our support.

10. The public is urged not to slacken its generous support of the North-Western Fair, at Chicago, May 30th, on account of any supposed passing away of the occasion for it. The money raised by that Fair, ~~probably the last of the magnificent series~~, if it be a million of dollars, will go little ways towards adequately meeting the distresses left among those whose blood and sicknesses have won Peace, when that Peace shall be fully declared and universally acknowledged.

11. The U. S. Sanitary Commission has never proposed to itself a lingering decline. It always had for its policy to carry out its work boldly with full confidence in the public support, and to stop short the moment it could not work efficiently and on a scale adequate to its ~~self-support~~ ^{duties}. We trust all connected with us share this feeling and will not permit this Commission to fade away, but rather finally to ~~set as the Sun sets, in full brightness and majesty.~~
close its career while in full energy and vigor.

12. Finally, in the opinion of the Board, any relaxation of zeal, labor and discipline in the United States Sanitary Commission, its Branches, or Aid Societies, would lower the moral tone of the homes of the land, and weaken the force of that public sentiment so necessary to be maintained in the unsettled condition of the country. By the death and memory of our beloved President, whose word called our Commission into existence, we pledge ourselves not to slacken our labors, and not to release you from yours, until the sacred ends of the war are all fully attained and made absolutely secure. And may God bless this resolution to us and to you!

By order of the Board,

HENRY W. BELLOWES,

President.